

MINISTRY OF

AGRICULTURE



ALLOTMENT AND *Garden Guide*

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"March winds and April showers,
Bring forth the May flowers."

That was a peace-time couplet. "Not yet must the flowers invade the fat green hinterland of the

war-time allotment", a Northern newspaper recently declared. As it pointed out, fresh allotment produce—garden stuff, too—is going to be of immense value during the first few years after the war, when there will be a great strain upon road, rail and all transport. The man who can grow his own produce on his own plot will not only be making an important contribution to a smooth transition from war to peace, but will also be looking after his own family interests best.



The Ministry does not rule out flowers altogether. As the Northern newspaper happily put it: "Now and again an allotment holder will disinterestedly set himself to cheer us all up by bedding out—in true peace-time parkland style—with lobelias, geraniums, pansies—just a happy fringe of them along the hem of his plot." The Ministry itself has said, in effect,

that not more than one-tenth of peace-time flowers should be grown, but the paper puts it better with its phrase "just a happy fringe", adding "But behind this gay facade wholesome



Just a happy fringe...

produce grows in abundance". And March is the month when gardeners really begin to get busy putting their plans into effect and starting work to produce this wholesome abundance. Now, abundance in summer is easy, but *sufficiency in winter—especially late winter and early spring—is another kettle of fish.* Too many gardeners still fall down on winter production, due to lack of planning. Your local Parks Superintendent or your local allotment or horticultural society may have produced a plan that suits local conditions and makes adequate provision for winter vegetables. Or you can still get the Ministry's cropping plan, not to follow it blindly, but to use it as a guide that you can adapt to meet your family's likes and dislikes and modify in the light of your knowledge of the kinds of vegetables that can be grown satisfactorily in your neighbourhood. And it may be worth your while re-reading what was said in the February

issue of this "Guide" about the importance of crop rotation.

Any week now, when weather and soil are right, you will want to start



sowing and planting. But one word of warning: don't try to sow seed when the soil sticks to your boots. Wait for a fine spell. When it is fine and the soil is workable, you will perhaps be making successional sowings of broad beans and spinach as described in the February "Guide". You will also be sowing seeds of Brussels sprouts and leeks—both in a special seedbed; parsnips, peas, onions, lettuces, radishes and parsley—where they are to grow on. And you may also be planting autumn-sown onions.

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But before getting down to detailed advice on sowing and planting, here are a few brief reminders that may not come amiss.

#### **UPROOT THOSE STUMPS**

Clear away those old stumps of Brussels, cabbage and so on and get the land prepared for another crop.

**SEEDS** You have no doubt already got the seeds of the vegetables just mentioned—also your seed potatoes, which should have been "sprouted";\* but during April and May you may be sowing beet, carrots and turnips, as well as runner beans (perhaps French and Haricots too), kale, savoy, cabbages and spinach beet. Marrows must not be overlooked either, if your family likes them. Make sure you get all the seeds in time.

**FERTILISER** You have probably got a supply of a suitable

fertiliser containing the three necessary plant foods—nitrogen, potash, phosphorus—with which to dress your land before sowing and planting. If you haven't, "National Growmore Fertiliser"—a Government recommended product—would suit your needs. 42 lb. will be enough for a 300 square yard plot. The January "Guide" described how to use it.

#### **STICKS AND STAKES**

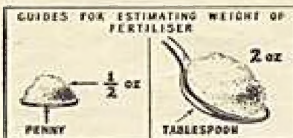
In April you will be sticking your peas, in June your runners. If you intend to grow tomatoes, you will need stakes for them at the end of May when you plant out. Have you got your sticks and stakes or ordered them?

### FEED SPRING CABBAGE

In the January "Guide" it was recommended that out of the 42 lb. of "National Growmore Fertiliser" that you might buy, you should set aside 2 lb. as a top dressing for spring cabbage. Or you can use sulphate of ammonia, applying it at the rate of one ounce per yard run. Lettuces and spinach would also benefit by a

similar application. But keep the fertiliser off the leaves.

**LIFT LETTUCES** If you grew lettuces last season and need the land on which they stand, for other crops, lift the remaining plants and heel them in in a shady spot. In any case, it is not wise to leave lettuces too long in their rows.



### GETTING THE "ROOT" GROUND READY

As soon as it becomes free, dig over the land you intend for your root crops. Leave it rough until you are ready to sow. In April you can break it down and lightly fork in a dressing of 1 lb. of "National Growmore Fertiliser" to every 10 square yards.

## Now for **SOWING & PLANTING**

Some seeds are best sown in a seedbed—for instance cabbage, kales, sprouts, sprouting broccoli and leeks; others, such as the root crops and

lettuces, are usually sown where they are to remain. As you may be sowing Brussels sprouts and leeks during March, let us first say something about

### *How to use a SEEDBED*

Here are the essential points:—

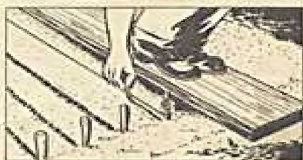
★ Mark off a patch about 6 ft. by 4 ft. for a 300 square yard allotment or garden. Break down all lumps during a dry spell and remove any stones and all roots of grass or weeds.

★ Make the soil firm by treading it as soon as it is dry enough not to stick to your boots. Don't stamp it down.

★ Loosen top surface by lightly raking. Place short sticks to mark ends of rows, which should be 4 ft. long across the bed and 6 in. apart. Stretch line between sticks.

★ Stand on a board so as not to tread ground too hard, and make shallow drill along line with label or stick.

★ Sow an even single line of seed along bottom of drill. Cover seed lightly with soil. A good way is to



MAKING DRILL



shuffle slowly along with a foot on either side of the drill, and without raising the feet slide the soil back and lightly press it. On heavy soil you may find it easier to scatter fine soil into the drill instead. Rake lightly to finish.



COVERING SEED

Here are two March items for the seedbed:—

### **BRUSSELS SPROUTS**

A small packet of seed is enough for each of the cabbage family. Seed may be sown in seedbed drills about  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. deep—1 ft. apart—from third week in March to end of April. Sow thinly, allowing  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. between each seed. To protect seedlings from birds use black cotton or wire guards and do it immediately after sowing.

**LEeks** Sow thinly in mid-March in shallow seedbed drills.

Here are several items for sowing in March on the actual site where the crops will grow:—

**PARSNIPS** may be sown from mid-February to mid-March. The Ministry's cropping plan (300 square yards) provides for three rows. Soil for parsnips should always be deeply dug and worked to a fine surface tith before sowing. Sow in drills 15 in. apart and 1 in. deep, dropping the seed in small clusters of three or four, 6 in. apart. Thin seedlings of each cluster so as to leave only one.



**PEAS** The Ministry's plan provides for three rows of dwarf peas 2 ft. 6 in. apart. In view of the difficulty of getting pea sticks, dwarf and medium varieties are most suitable for the garden or allotment, since they can be supported by fewer sticks or by string stretched between short sticks inserted at intervals either side of the row.

If mice are troublesome, before sowing shake the seed in a tin containing a little red lead or paraffin.

**NEVER SOW PEAS IN WET SOIL.** Wait until it is just nicely moist and works freely. Sow in broad, flat drills from 2 to 2½ in. deep, made with either draw-hoe or spade.

Don't just scatter the



seeds slapdash in the drill: set them out in three rows (as illustrated) allowing about 3 in. each way between seeds. This may sound unnecessarily finicky, but it is worth it and the job takes only a few extra minutes.

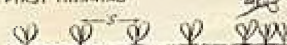
Space the rows according to the height of variety, 2 ft. for dwarfs, 3 ft. for medium and 5 ft. for tall.

Birds will attack the germinating seeds as they come up, so protect the rows with black cotton stretched on sticks about 6 in. above soil. Or you can use pea guards.

**LETTUCE** (Summer). Begin in March to sow very thinly in drills, half a row at a time,  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. deep, the rows being 1 ft. apart. Continue to sow at fortnightly intervals until July. March-sown lettuces attract slugs, so lime the surface as a deterrent.

Thin the seedlings when the first pairs of true leaves are well formed. The final distance apart should be from 9 to 12 in.

FIRST THINNING



SECOND THINNING



**RADISHES** If you like radishes, you can make a small sowing in March ( $\frac{1}{2}$  in. deep) and follow up with sowings about every three weeks until May, to keep up a continuous supply.

**PARSLEY** Make a sowing of parsley in March ( $\frac{1}{4}$  in. deep) and a second sowing in July for succession. Thin seedlings to 3 to 4 in. apart.

**ONIONS** The Ministry's cropping plan provides for eight rows of onions. There are three ways of growing them for storage:—

- (1) by sowing seed under glass or in warm frames in January and February, and transplanting in April;
- (2) by sowing seed in the open in February or March;
- (3) by sowing in early autumn and transplanting in March.

By sowing in boxes, seed can be made to yield the maximum number of plants. The second method is popular and can be freely practised almost anywhere; but where soils are difficult to work or onion fly is troublesome, the other methods are recommended.

The onion bed must always be carefully prepared whatever method you use. Soil should have been dug early (before Christmas) and manured liberally. Firmness of soil is essential.

Early sowing is also important, and the bed should be prepared as soon as soil is dry enough to work in Feb-



ruary or March, that is, when it does not stick to the boots. Tread it both ways and rake level, removing all large stones. The seed drills should be drawn 9 to 12 in. apart and about 1 in. deep. Sow seed fairly thinly and evenly and cover it with earth with the feet or back of rake. The soil requires to be gently consolidated by another light treading or by using a light roller.

Onion seed is rather fickle; it may germinate well or badly, and quickly or slowly according to weather conditions; but 1 oz. of seed should be sufficient for at least 100 feet. As a rule, it takes about three weeks to come up. It is a good plan to mix with it a little



(PLANTS 6" APART IN ROW FOR LARGE ONIONS)

radish seed; this will germinate quickly and mark the rows, making it possible to cultivate and weed between them before the slower germinating onions come through, when the radishes can be pulled for salad.

Autumn-sown onions should be transplanted in early March on to the prepared onion bed. Plant (see illustration) in rows 1 ft. apart with about 6 in. between plants (for large onions).

## ***This POTATO business***

Throughout the war the Ministry has been consistent in its advice that the household grower should not overdo potatoes (as many are apt to do), that he should not aim at self-sufficiency in this crop unless he has enough ground to allow him first to grow green crops—salads, summer vegetables and, above all, enough winter greens and root crops for his family. "Follow the official cropping plan" has all along been the advice given. And that plan provides for three 30 ft. rows of "earlies" and six 30 ft. rows of main crops for a 300 square yard plot. On plots half that size or less the Ministry considers it would be unwise to use any of the space for main crop potatoes, though two rows of "earlies" might be grown. The limited room in small gardens would be better used for growing green winter vegetables.

### **PLANTING EARLY POTATOES**

If possible, all potato planters—great and small—should "sprout" their seed potatoes before planting, as advised in the previous issues of this "Guide". In any year it is a useful thing to do before planting, because it makes for a larger yield and brings the crop to maturity some weeks earlier.

If you have sprouted your seed potatoes, there is no need to be in a hurry about planting them out. Wait for favourable conditions. With unsprouted seed, however, it is important that the first sprouts, which are the most vigorous, should be formed

in the soil rather than in the bag, for this will reduce the risk of damage in handling. This means early planting. A simple way of planting is to take out shallow trenches 2 ft. apart and 4-5 in. deep on heavy soil, and about 6 in. on light land. The distance between the tubers in the row ought to be not less than 12 in. (15 in. for maincrops).

Heavier crops will be secured by using fertilisers. For gardens and allotments "National Growmore" fertiliser is most convenient. It

contains nitrogen, phosphorus and potash—the three important plant foods. The



method is to give a dressing of 1 lb. per 10 sq. yards, forked in before planting. Also sow in the drills before planting a light dressing at the rate of 1 lb. per 60 ft. Tubers should not be dusted with artificial, as the eye or sprout may be damaged.

Don't apply lime to cultivated soil in the same season in which it is proposed to crop it with potatoes.



# FOOD FOR YOUR GARDEN FROM YOUR GARDEN

The importance of compost was dealt with in the January "Guide". Now it is proposed to tell you what you can use to make it and how to make it—in pictures.

## WHAT YOU CAN USE

Leaves, grass cuttings, straw sods, lawn mowings, haulms of peas, beans and potatoes, vegetable tops, hedge clippings, weeds, and faded flowers. In fact, any plant refuse not needed for stock feeding.

## WHAT YOU CAN'T USE

Cinders, paper, coal ashes, thick woody stems, sawdust, and any materials tainted with oil, creosote, tar or with any poisonous chemical. Avoid cabbage roots affected by 'club-root' disease.

## Make a COMPOST HEAP this way



1. Choose site, in shade if possible, on ground not used for cropping. Width 4-7 ft. Length depends on amount of material available.



2. Cover with layer of vegetable refuse (the more mixed and broken up the better) to 6-9 in. depth. If dry, moisten and tread down well. If green and sappy, lay loosely.



3. (Left) Cover with 2 in. layer of animal manure (horse, cow, pig, poultry, pigeon, rabbit) or sewage sludge.

3. (Right) If animal manure is not available, sprinkle with one of the special proprietary chemicals or with sulphate of ammonia.



4. Repeat layers 2 and 3 until heap is 3-5 ft. high. If more material is to be dealt with, start a new heap.



5. Sprinkle a little lime, ground limestone or chalk, after every foot or so, or apply layer of chalky soil about 2 in. thick. But if using chemicals, follow maker's directions about lime.



6. When heap has cooled down, turn it over from one end to the other, so that the outside material goes to the middle and that from the middle to the outside.

# Things to do in the FRUIT GARDEN

Fruit benefit by a spring application of 1 oz. of sulphate of ammon per square yard, worked into the surface soil in spring. And if you are having garden bonfires in March, don't forget to keep the wood ash in a dry place. Apples and pears need the potash the wood ash contains, so work the ash into the soil in April.

Plum trees, too, benefit from a dressing of 2 oz. of sulphate of ammonia to the square yard in spring.



Early in April you may have to spray your blackcurrants, if they are troubled with "big bud".

Lime sulphur is the spray for this and you can get it ready made up with full directions for use.

Gooseberries also should be sprayed in April with lime sulphur, to ward off mildew before the flowers appear.

Apples (except "Beauty of Bath," "Stirling Castle" and "St. Cecilia") may be sprayed with lime sulphur while still in the green bud stage, that is, when the green flower buds are visible but have not begun to turn colour. This treatment will protect against "scab," but should be repeated during April when the trees are at the "pink bud" stage, that is, before the flower buds begin to open, but after they have begun to show colour.

## SOME PUBLICATIONS that may help you

If you would like more information about compost making than this "Guide" gives you, you would find this leaflet provides it—"Dig for Victory" Leaflet No. 7—"How to make a Compost Heap". As disease control in the fruit garden has been touched on, you may also like to get No. 18—"Better Fruit—Disease Control in Private Gardens".

All these leaflets are free, and you can get them by dropping a post-card to the Ministry at Berri Court Hotel, St. Annes, Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire.

The April "Guide" will touch on some pests of the vegetable garden. One of the Ministry's bulletins, "Pests and Diseases in the Vegetable Garden" deals more fully with the subject and if you have not already got it you may like to know where it is obtainable. It costs 4d. (post free 5d.) and you can get it through any bookseller or direct from H.M. Stationery Office, York House, Kingsway, L'don, W.C.2

